AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of generating a concept dictionary ~~(140)~~ for use in querying an information system ~~(125)~~, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

     (i)   receiving an information search criterion;

     (ii)   deriving ~~(105)~~ <u>from said received search criterion</u>, using a lexical reference source ~~(115)~~, at least one <u>different</u> search criterion having related meaning to said received search criterion ~~(110)~~;

     (iii)   identifying <u>a set</u> of information in said information system ~~(125)~~ relevant to said received search criterion ~~(110)~~ and <u>a different set of information in said information system relevant</u> to said at least one derived search criterion;

     (iv)   ~~analysing~~ <u>analyzing</u> the identified sets of information ~~to derive~~ <u>and deriving from similarities and differences therebetween</u> relationships between said received search criterion ~~(110)~~ and said at least one derived search criterion in the context of said information system ~~(125)~~; and

     (v)   storing, in a concept dictionary ~~(140)~~, information relating to said received ~~(110)~~ and said at least one derived search criterion and to respective said derived relationships therebetween, for use in querying said information system ~~(125)~~.

2.   (Currently Amended) A method as in Claim 1, wherein, at step (i), receiving an information search criterion (110) comprises selecting an information search criterion stored in said concept dictionary (140).

3.   (Currently Amended) A method as in Claim 1, wherein, at step (ii), deriving at least one search criterion having related meaning comprises replacing a term of said received search criterion (110) with a related term having a more specific meaning according to said lexical reference source (115).

4.   (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (ii) deriving at least one search criterion having related meaning comprises replacing a term of said received search criterion (110) with a related term having a more general meaning according to said lexical reference source (115).

5.   (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (ii) deriving at least one search criterion having related meaning comprises replacing a term of said received search criterion (110) with a related term having an equivalent meaning according to said lexical reference source (115).

6.   (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (ii), said lexical reference source (115) is a thesaurus.

7. (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (ii), said lexical

reference source (115) is an ontological database.

8. (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (ii), a plurality of

search criteria are derived, each having related meaning to said received search criterion (110),

and wherein at step (iv), the respective identified sets of information are analysed analyzed to

derive relationships between search criteria comprised in said plurality of derived search criteria.

9. (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein, at step (iv), deriving

relationships between said search criteria comprises performing fuzzy processing of said derived

search criteria and respective said identified sets of information to determine a measure of the

generalisation and/or specialisation of one said search criterion over another in the context of

said information system (125).

10. (Currently Amended) A method of accessing sets of information stored in an

information system (125) using information search criteria stored in a concept dictionary (140)

generated for the information system (125) according to the method in claim 1, further

comprising the steps of:

(a)   selecting a first information search criterion;

(b)   using a search engine to identify one or more sets of information in the

information system (125) relevant to said first information search criterion; and

(c)   selecting at least one further information search criterion from search criteria

stored in the concept dictionary (140), semantically related to said first information search

criterion according to information stored in the concept dictionary (140), according to whether a

more general, a more specialised specialized or an equivalent search is required.

11.   (Currently Amended) An information retrieval apparatus (100) for accessing sets

of information stored in an information system (125), comprising, said apparatus comprising;

an input for receiving an information search criterion (110);

deriving means (105) for deriving from said received search criterion, using a lexical

reference source (115), at least one different search criterion having related meaning to said

received information search criterion (110);

retrieval means (120) for identifying sets a set of information in said information system

(125) relevant to said received search criterion (110) and a different set of information in said

information system relevant to said at least one derived search criterion;

analysis means (135) for analysing analyzing said identified sets of information to derive

and deriving from similarities and differences therebetween relationships between said received

search criterion (110) and said at least one derived search criterion in the context of said

information system (125); and

- 7 -

updating means for storing, in a concept dictionary (140), information relating to said

received (110) and said at least one derived search criterion and to respective said derived

relationships therebetween, for use in querying said information system (125).